

Message Text

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SUBJ: FORLANI'S EMPRESSIONS OF MOSCOW VISIT

1. DURING AN JANUARY 21 CONVERSATION WITH THE DCM, FOREIGN MINISTER ARNALDO FORLANI SHARED SOME PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS OF HIS RECENTLY COMPLETED OFFICIAL VISIT TO MOSCOW. FORLANI'S TRIP WAS UNDERTAKEN WITHIN THE ITALIAN-SOVIET AGREEMENT ON TWICE YEARLY POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS AT THE FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL.

2. FORLANI SAID HE SENSED THAT THE SOVIETS ARE RATHER DIFFIDENT TOWARD THE NEW CARTER ADMINISTRATION. HE RECEIVED THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT THEY FAVORED THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION BECAUSE THEY KNEW PRESIDENT FORD AND SECRETARY KISSINGER. AT THE MOMENT THEY SEEM TO FEEL A LITTLE UNSETTLED, AND IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT THEY WANT DIRECT CONTACT BETWEEN THE US AND THE USSR IN ORDER TO DISCUSS MATTERS WHICH WILL BE OF MAJOR CONCERN TO THE WESTERN EUROPEANS. AS AN EXANPLE, FORLANI CITED THE SOVIET INSISTENCE ON PUSHING THE IDEA OF A TREATY AGAINST FIRST USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. FORLANI HAD
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ARGUED THAT IN A SITUATION WHERE THE SOVIETS HAVE GREATLY INCREASED THEIR CONVENTIONAL MILITARY FORCES, THE WEST NATURALLY COULD NOT GIVE UP THE POSSIBLE THREAT OF NUCLEAR RESPONSE NECESSARY AS A DETERRENT.

3. FORLANI SAID THAT BREZHNEV IS CONCERNED THAT SOMETHING BE DONE THIS YEAR ABOUT PUTTING A LIMIT ON ARMAMENTS, FEARING

THAT IF A CONSTANT ARMS RACE CONTINUES, ACCUMULATION OF DESTRUCTIVE POWER WILL HAVE ITS OWN DYNAMIC. IN FORLANI'S OPINION, THE SOVIETS HAVE SERIOUS FINANCIAL PROBLEMS AND WOULD WELCOME RELIEF FROM THE BURDEN OF WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT AND MANUFACTURE.

4. THE FOREIGN MINISTER OBSERVED A MARKED DIFFERENCE IN SOVIET ATTITUDES CONCERNING THE MIDDLE EAST DURING HIS JANUARY 10-14 VISIT TO MOSCOW. IN EARLIER MEETINGS WITH GROMYKO AT THE UN, THE RUSSIANS HAD BEEN INTRANSIGENT IN PUTTING ALL THE BLAME ON THE ISRAELIS AND DEMANDING THAT THE ISRAELIS MAKE ALL THE CONCESSIONS IN RENEWING THE GENEVA TALKS. THIS TIME FORLANI SAID THAT BOTH BREZHNEV AND GROMYKO EXPRESSED AN APPRECIATION FOR ISRAELI NEED FOR SECURITY GUARANTEES AND A WILLINGNESS TO ADMIT THAT THE ARABS, ESPECIALLY THE PALESTINIANS, HAD SOME FAULTS AS REGARDS THEIR POSITIONS AND ATTITUDES.

5. FORLANI HAS A DISTINCT IMPRESSION THAT THE SOVIETS ARE ANXIOUS FOR MOVEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST, AND HE THINKS THEY MIGHT BE PREPARED TO USE THEIR INFLUENCE WITH THE PALESTINIANS TO GET THE GENEVA TALKS RESTARTED IF THE US WERE TO INFLUENCE ISRAEL TOWARD RESUMPTION OF TALKS. VOLPE

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